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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/003,644	11/02/2001	Charles Stone	12615US02	1544

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EXAMINER

ZALUKAEVA, TATYANA

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

1713

DATE MAILED: 11/10/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/003,644

Applicant(s)

STONE ET AL.

Examiner

Tatyana Zalukaeva

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 02 November 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 22-33 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 22-33 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 03/04/2002.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Priority

1. An application in which the benefits of an earlier application are desired must contain a specific reference to the prior application(s) in the first sentence of the specification or in an application data sheet (37 CFR 1.78(a)(2) and (a)(5)). The specific reference to any prior nonprovisional application must include the relationship (i.e., continuation, divisional, or continuation-in-part) between the applications except when the reference is to a prior application of a CPA assigned the same application number. Continuity data should also be updated.

2. Claims 22-33 are currently pending in the Application.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

5. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

6. Claims 22-33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Steck et al (U.S. 6258861) in view of anyone of the following: Ohtani et al (U.S. 4,097,383) or Warwicker et al (U.S. 3,860,680), each one individually.

Steck discloses a composite ion exchange membrane comprising a stripped porous polymer film impregnated with ion exchange resin based on α,β,β -trifluorostyrene (abstract), wherein the porous film consists essentially of polyethylene and polypropylene (col. 7, lines 60-65), as well as of polyvinylidene fluoride (col.10, line 60) and the exchange polymer is based on α,β,β -trifluorostyrene (col. 5 through col.9). The degree of porosity of the porous polymer film used in a composite membrane depends on its future application (col.10, lines 65-67, col.11, lines 1-5). The loading of ion exchange polymeric composition onto substrate (film) is varied in order to control the porosity of the resulting composite membrane. If the membrane is gas impermeable then the degree of impregnation and loading of ion exchange composition is selected such to reduce the porosity of the resulting membrane up to zero (col.11, lines 5-14).

This reads on the limitation of the instant claims 22 "at least partially filling the porosity of the film". With regard to the use of ultra high molecular weight polyethylene, as per claim 28, the Examples 1, 2 and 3 in col.12, 13 of Steck utilize high density polyethylene of specific trademark. This is an ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene.

The disclosure of Steck differs from the instant claims by not specifically indicating that the polymer film is stripped. However, the films of UHMW polyethylene used in Steck are obtained by extrusion, that also can be regarded as partial stripping of the surface layer of obtained polymer. Steck further motivates those skilled in the art to have smooth surface of a substrate for better controlling the degree of impregnation, and thus to control the porosity of resulting polymer (see col.11, lines 1-9).

Moreover, modification of surfaces of porous substrates in order to make them smoother and more homogeneous before applying coating or impregnating with other materials is known in the art. Thus, Ohtani discloses a process for production of microporous sheet from polymeric materials, by peeling the sheet from the plate, thus splitting the sheet into two sheets (stripping one or more layers from the initial sheet) (abstract).

Warwicker discloses a method for producing polymer sheets with improved surface smoothness by applying a coagulable polymer composition on evenly porous belt and then sliding the belt over a trough.

Therefore, those skilled in the art would have found obvious to modify and improve the surface of the polymer film as done by Ohtani or Warwicker in the production of composite ion exchange membranes of Steck in order to improve the

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smoothness of a polymer film and thus to control the degree of impregnation and porosity of the resulting film, as suggested by Steck.

7. Other prior art cited in PTOL-892 shows the state of the art.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Tatyana Zalukaeva whose telephone number is (571) 272-1115. The examiner can normally be reached on 9:00 - 5:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David Wu can be reached on (571) 272-1114. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Tatyana Zalukaeva
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1713

November 8, 2004

